



**HORSE SPORT IRELAND**

**HSI CODE OF ETHICS FOR CHILDREN IN SPORT**

**GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER  
PERSONNEL WORKING WITH CHILDREN /  
JUNIORS**



## INTRODUCTION

As the organisation recognised by the international federation, as being responsible for the administration of horse sport in Ireland, Horse Sport Ireland (“HSI”) endeavours to:

- Encourage young people to ride and enjoy all sport connected with horses and riding.
- Provide guidance in riding and horsemanship, and the correct care of their animals.
- Promote the highest ideals of sportsmanship, citizenship and loyalty, thereby cultivating strength of character and self-discipline.

HSI has adopted and implemented the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport (“Code of Ethics). To maximise compliance with the Code of Ethics HSI has:

- Ensured the procedures of HSI reflect a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, selecting and managing persons working with children within HSI and/or in connection with HSI activities;
- Appointed a Designated Liaison Person;
- Ensured that effective disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures are in place;
- Ensured procedures for dealing with a concern or complaint made to the Statutory Authorities against a committee member or a Leader are in place; and
- Designated an appropriate senior officer in the Governing Body as the person with responsibility for following the guidelines of the Code of Ethics.

To continue to maximise compliance with the Code of Ethics, HSI shall:

- **[Ensure that all sports clubs with child members are fully affiliated and signed up to HSI’s constitution];**
- Be represented by appropriate personnel at all education/training workshops dealing with the Code of Ethics;
- Review our child protection procedures regularly through open discussion with our members, Sports Councils and Statutory Authorities;
- Promote contact with representatives of the Statutory Authorities. The building of these relationships will contribute to the creation of an environment in which education and knowledge of child protection issues and procedures are widely known; and
- Examine and take appropriate action in response to any reports or observations of unusual incidents (high rate of transfers, dropouts) received from clubs.



Horse Sport Ireland is committed to providing the best possible environment for all young people involved in sport. Horse Sport Ireland also has a duty to care for volunteers working with its Children and juniors on behalf of the organisation. Horse Sport Ireland expects appropriate behaviour from all Children, juniors, parents and others participating in HSI organised activities.

Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the following shall be deemed to be inappropriate behaviour:

- Possession, use or distribution of any illegal drugs or alcohol
- Profanity, base & / or vulgar language or gestures
- Harassment / Bullying – using words or actions that intimidate, threaten or persecute others before, during or following HSI activities.
- Failure to follow rules and or obey instructions
- Cheating (deliberate attempt to circumvent or undermine the spirit or letter of the rules as is deemed by the Board of HSI, in accordance with accepted good practice and in conformity with the written rules so as to gain a competitive advantage by their own actions).
- Abusing a horse / pony, and or any other animal.
- Dishonesty (statement or endorsement of an untruth) and or theft.

Any conduct or action not befitting or in breach of HSI's ethos shall be dealt with by HSI as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Assistants:** Assistants are those people who provide back-up to any of the roles outlined in this section and often such assistants are involved on an intermittent basis (e.g. provision of lifts to matches or competitions; checking equipment, etc.).

**Child:** For the purpose of the Code of Ethics a child is, in accordance with the Child Care Act 1991, any person under 18 years of age who is unmarried.

**Coordinators / Administrators:** Persons who act in a coordinating or administrative capacity for HSI. While Coordinators and Administrators may not be actively involved in children's sport, they may be involved in organising activities and events.

**Horse Sport Ireland (HSI):** is the Governing body for Equestrian sport in Ireland.

**HSI Officers:** Chairperson, CEO, Board Members, Management who are appointed to oversee all activities and the development of the organisation.

**Leaders:** For the purpose of the Code of Ethics all adults involved in children's sport are referred to as Leaders. All have a role to play in ensuring that procedures as described in the Code of Ethics are implemented, agreed, followed and reviewed on a regular basis.

**Manager:** A manager is an individual who takes overall responsibility for a team or a group of sports people and who will often have a direct input into the nature and organisation of the activity itself.

**Mentor:** A mentor is an individual who undertakes an overseeing role with a group of children, often in co-operation with other mentors.

**National Children's Officers:** Children's Officers are appointed within the organisation to act as a resource for children and to represent them at Board / Committee level.

**Official:** An official is an individual charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the rules of an activity are adhered to in a formal way. This category includes judges, stewards, etc.

**Selector:** A selector is an individual who has responsibility for the selection of children for teams and events.

**Tutor /Coach/Trainer:** is a person who assists the young participant to develop his or her skills and abilities in a progressive way.



### **Designated Liaison Person – Role and Responsibility**

HSI has appointed [**Triona Connors**] as the Designated Liaison Person.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Mob: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

The role of the Designated Liaison Person is to:

- Provide information and advice on child protection within HSI.
- Ensure that the organisation's child protection policy and procedures are followed.
- To inform Community Services of situations which give rise to potential concerns in relation to a child.
- Ensure appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover.
- Liaise with Community Services / An Garda Siochana and other agencies as appropriate
- Keep relevant people informed within HSI.
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by HSI, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome in a secure and confidential manner.
- Advise HSI of child protection training needs including possible seminars to refresh individuals as to their responsibilities and obligations.

The designated person is responsible for acting as:

- A source of advice on child protection matters
- For co-ordinating action within HIS
- For liaising with HSE and An Garda Siochana and other agencies about suspected or actual cases of child abuse.



HSI will take certain steps to ensure the suitability of people working with children and young people. This will include background checks and Garda vetting for all volunteers with substantial access to Children.

Potential volunteers will complete the required application form, attached to this document and will declare that he or she is familiar with and agrees to comply with and be bound by the Code of Ethics.

Potential sports leaders and volunteers must complete an Application/ Garda Vetting form, giving names of two references that can be contacted. Where possible there will be an interview. References will be followed up.

Terms of reference, clearly outlining the tasks to be performed and the skills required, will be presented to any volunteer accepted to work with HSI.

Every effort will be made to manage and support appointed volunteers. There will always be adequate supervision provided and volunteers will not have to work alone.

When travel is involved, volunteers travelling with young people must sign a separate agreement.

The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco must be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.

Remember your behaviour towards young people, other Leaders, and opponents will have an effect on the young people in your care.

Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at young people for making mistakes.

All young people are entitled to respect.

Be careful to avoid the “star system”. Each child deserves equal time and attention.

Care must be taken not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement

Physical punishment or physical force must never be used. Never punish a mistake - by verbal means, physical means or by exclusion.

Insist that young people in your care respect the rules of the organisation. Insist on fair play and ensure that young people in your care know that you will not tolerate cheating or bullying behaviour.



Remember that young people ride for fun and enjoyment and that skill and riding for fun have priority over highly structured competition.

Never make winning the only objective.

Encourage the development of respect for opponents, Officials, Selectors, Coaches and other volunteers. Avoid criticism of fellow Leaders.

It is important to realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or by outsiders. Avoid working alone with one participant and ensure there is adequate supervision for all activities.

Leaders are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with participants and children. It is advisable for volunteers not to involve the team members in their personal life, i.e. visits to volunteer's home or overnight stays.

Set realistic goals for the team and for the individual Children.  
Create a safe and enjoyable environment.

Avoid giving advice of a personal or medical nature if you are not qualified to do so. Any information of a personal or medical nature must be kept strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires the passing on of this information.

**Participants of all ages should never:**

- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage over other participants or officials
- Use bullying tactics to isolate another team member / participant
- Use violence or physical contact that is not allowed within the rules
- Shout or argue with officials, team members or participants
- Harm fellow team members, participants or their property
- Cheat
- Make false allegations against other team members, participants or adults
- Use illicit drugs, alcohol or tobacco at HSI training / coaching sessions, team events or other HSI activities.

**Participants of all ages are entitled to:**

- Be listened to
- Be believed
- Be safe and feel safe
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy the sport
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Approach the Children's Officer/Designated Liaison Person with any questions or concerns they might have.



## **CHILD PROTECTION**

The prevention and detection of child abuse depends upon the collaborative efforts of everyone concerned. The following factors are central to the effective protection of children in sport:

- Acceptance by persons working with children that abuse, whether physical, psychological or sexual is wrong, severely damages children and must be confronted.
- Awareness of the behavioural and physical indicators of various forms of abuse.
- Knowledge of the appropriate response and action to be taken where abuse is revealed or suspected.
- Vigilance and avoidance of all situations conducive to risk.
- Open, trusting and co-operative relationships within the organisation and with parents/guardians and others concerned with children's progress and welfare.
- Willingness to co-operate with the Statutory Authorities (police, health boards or social services), in relation to sharing information about child protection concerns at any time.

Officials, Tutors, Team Trainers, Coaches, Volunteers and all other Leaders should be familiar with Child Abuse/Child Protection issues (see in particular pages 38 to 44) of the Code of Ethics. Those Leaders with responsibility for children's welfare should attend an Irish Sports Council or other certified Child Protection Course.

### **Reporting Child Abuse**

If reporting child abuse to the Statutory Authorities you should

- Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.
- Report the matter as soon as possible to the person designated for reporting abuse (i.e. the Designated Liaison Person as set out in the beginning of these guidelines). If the Designated Liaison Person has reasonable grounds (see section 5.13.1 Code of Ethics) for believing a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the health board/social services which has statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Liaison Person is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardaí should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.
- If the Designated Liaison Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist or not, s/he should informally consult with the local health board/social services. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter required a formal report.
- A Designated Liaison Person reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities should first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.
- It is best to report child abuse concerns by making personal contact with the relevant personnel in the Statutory Authorities.



### **Criminal Justice Act 2006**

The Criminal Justice Act 2006 provides for an offence of reckless endangerment of children. This may be committed by a person who has authority or control over a child or an abuser and who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:

- Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse; or
- Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation.

### **Protection for persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998**

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to the Health Board or the Gardaí (See section 5.13.1 of the Code of Ethics). The main provisions of the Act are:

- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated offices of Health Boards or any member of An Garda Síochána.
- The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal.
- The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Where reasonable grounds for concern exist (see section 5.13.1 in the Code of Ethics) in an organisation the following steps should be taken:

- Advice should be sought from the local health board/social services with regard to any action by the organisation deemed necessary to protect the child/children who may be at risk.
- The matter should be reported to the local health board/social services following the standard reporting procedure contained in the Code of Ethics book.
- In the event that the concern is connected to the actions of an Official in the organisation, the Official involved in the concern should be asked to stand aside pending the outcome of any investigation by the Statutory Authorities. It is advisable that this task be undertaken by an appointed Board /Committee member (e.g. the Designated Liaison Person)
- The person who is the subject of the complaint should be informed privately of the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her and the nature of the allegation. S/he should be afforded an opportunity to respond. Her/his response should be noted and passed on to the health board/social services personnel.

- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family,) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.
- Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in relation to concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within the organisation. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected. The following points should be borne in mind:
  - A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child supersedes all other considerations.
  - All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know.
  - Information should be conveyed in a sensitive way to the parents/guardians of the child about whom there are concerns.
  - Giving information to others on a “need to know” basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Efforts must be made to remove abusive and bullying behaviour in all its forms no matter the method of communication (e.g. in person, via email, telephone, social media, etc):

- **Child to Child** – includes physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, or isolation.
- **Adult to Child** – includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidating nature, or any comment intended to degrade a child.
- **Adult to Adult** – includes verbal aggression towards other adults in order to achieve a beneficial outcome for own self or own child.
- **Child to Adult** - includes repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidating nature by an individual child or a group of young people.

### What is bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and young people. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening, and hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim.



## **Forms of bullying**

- Child to Child – includes physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, or isolation.
- Adult to Child – includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidating nature, or any comment intended to degrade a child.
- Adult to Adult – includes verbal aggression towards other adults in order to achieve a beneficial outcome for own self or own child.
- Child to Adult - includes repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidating nature by an individual child or a group of children.

## **How would you know if a child is being bullied?**

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so. The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied:

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities;
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings);
- Stress-caused illness - headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained;
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven);
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations;
- Having few friends;
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed);
- Not eating;
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide;
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics)

The above list is only a sample of behaviours which might indicate a child is being bullied and is not intended to be all-inclusive.

## **Who should deal with bullying?**

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochána, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Leaders within the organisation.

## **How can bullying be prevented?**

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Deal with any incidents as they arise.
- Use a whole group policy or 'no-blame approach', i.e., not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group.
- Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right'.



- Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operative and help others, particularly new or different children.
- Offer victim immediate support and put the 'no blame approach' into operation.
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can't ignore it, and it hurts too much.
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game.
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault.

## USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC AND FILMING EQUIPMENT

HSI enforces a policy in relation to the use of images of children / juniors on its websites and in other publications, as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on sports websites and publications.

Where possible HSI will avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport.

### Guidelines for use of photography:

- If a photograph is used on a website, avoid naming the child/junior.
- Ask for the child's permission and their parent's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
- Only use images of children / juniors in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.
- No cameras are allowed where children/ juniors are changing.
- No unauthorised photography allowed at site of an accident.
- If you are aware of the use of inappropriate images report this to the Designated Liaison or the social service and/or Gardaí.
- Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the children's officer or organiser of the event. The organisation will display the following information prior to the start of an event to inform spectators of the policy:
  - *"In line with the Code of Conduct, the organiser of this event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with the Official in charge. On no account should children be photographed or filmed without their permission and the permission of their parents".*
- When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity or event we will aim to ensure they are clear about our expectations of them in relation to child protection.



- Where professional photographers/film/video operators wish to record an event or practice session the children's officer or event organiser may provide them accreditation if they produce their professional identification for the details to be recorded. They will receive:
  - A clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
  - Identification which must be worn at all times
  - Instructions to keep a record of accreditations
  - HSI, the children's officer or the event organiser will inform participants and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at the event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs
  - The photographer will not be allowed unsupervised access to participants or one to one photo sessions at events nor access to photo sessions outside the events or at any participant's home.

#### **Videoing as a coaching aid**

Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the participant and the participant's parent/carer.

Anyone concerned about any photography taking place at events or training sessions should contact the Designated Liaison Person or children's officer at the event.



## Horse Sport Ireland

### Application form for volunteers, newly recruited to work with Children:

Role:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel (h): \_\_\_\_\_ (w): \_\_\_\_\_ (mob): \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Experience/or involvement in Sport: Give details:

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation in the past?

Yes:  No:

If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.

Have you ever been prosecuted or convicted of a criminal offence

Yes  No

Have you ever been the subject of a caution or a Bound Over Order:

Yes  No

Are you at present the subject of criminal investigations? Yes  No

If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.

Do you agree to abide by the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Childrens' Sport in Ireland and by the relevant Horse Sport Ireland General Rules and codes of practice?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_



Please give names and address of two responsible people whom we can contact and who from personal knowledge are willing to endorse your application: If you have had previous involvement in sport, one of these names should be that of an administrator/leader of your last club/place of involvement.

1.Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

2.Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Horse Sport Ireland

### Sample Letter to person giving reference:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear

The above has expressed an interest in becoming an official/volunteer and has given your name as a referee. This post involves substantial access to children. As an organisation committed to the welfare and happiness of children, we are anxious to know if you are satisfied that this person is suitable to work with children in a sporting capacity.

*If you are happy to complete this reference, any information will be treated with due confidentiality and in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance. Information will only be shared with the person conducting the assessment of the candidate's suitability for the post, if he/she is offered the position. We appreciate you being extremely candid, open and honest in your evaluation.*

How long have you known this person?

In what capacity?

Please rate this person on the following (tick one box for each statement)

	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Responsibility-					
Maturity-					
Self motivation-					
Can motivate others-					
Energy-					
Trustworthiness-					
Reliability-					

This post involves substantial access to young people. As an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of young people, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children and young people. If you answer no we will contact you in confidence.

Are you satisfied that: (name of applicant) \_\_\_\_\_ is suitable to work with children in a sporting capacity?

Yes  No

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_